

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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UNCLAS WELLINGTON 2039

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, GATT, NZ

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER COMMENTS FURTHER ON NAFTA

REF: WELLINGTON 1917

1. IN A SPEECH TO THE AUCKLAND MANUFACTURERS' FEDERATION ON JULY 15, THE NZ PRIME MINISTER, W.E. ROWLING, INCLUDED SOME REMARKS ON NEW ZEALAND'S ATTITUDE TOWARD NAFTA DEVELOPMENTS. THE PM'S REMARKS WERE MORE MODERATED AND LESS ACCUSING THAN THOSE RECENTLY UTTERED BY HIS MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY (SEE REFTEL).

2. MR. ROWLING ACKNOWLEDGED THAT GNZ HAS NOT BEEN "ENTIRELY HAPPY" WITH THE WAY NAFTA HAS BEEN RUNNING AND WITH THE RESULTS ACHIEVED. IN EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER THE STEADILY WIDENING GAP IN TRANS-TASMAN TRADE, HE RAISED THE QUESTION WHY NAFTA HAD NOT PROVIDED A BETTER BALANCE. HE OBSERVED THAT THE PROBLEMS NZ FACES IN NAFTA WERE NOT CREATED IN THE PAST 2 1/2 YEARS ALONE. HE SAID RECENT EXPERIENCES ON PROPOSED AUSTRALIAN RESTRICTIONS ON IMPORTS OF MAJOR

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CONCERN TO NZ "HAD BROUGHT INTO QUESTION THE DEPTH OF THE

SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH NAFTA HAS BECOME SUCH A KEY FACTOR". BUT HE ADDED THAT HE WAS NOT PESSIMISTIC ABOUT NAFTA'S FUTURE. WITH GOOD WILL, "AND WE HAVE PLENTY OF IT ON BOTH SIDES", NZ CAN OVERCOME SHORT TERM CRISES, MR. ROWLING SAID GNZ WANTS TO SEE A "BROADER AND DEEPER TRANS-TASMAN RELATIONSHIP, BUT ONE IN WHICH NAFTA WILL PLAY A BALANCED ROLE".

COMMENT: THE ABSENCE OF A WARNING TONE IN MR. ROWLING'S MORE CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS ON NAFTA CONVEYS THE IDEA OF A TRADING PARTNER MORE READY TO BUILD UPON AND STRENGTHEN NAFTA THAN ONE QUESTIONING ITS FUTURE AND PREDICTING THAT IT MAY "SLOWLY SHAKE TO PIECES".

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